

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME
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SETAF VICENZA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MILAN 0251

EO 11652: XGDS-1 DECLAS FEB 16, 1988
TAGS: PFOR PINT PINR IT
SUBJECT: CABLE FROM TRENTO

SUMMARY: DC-PCI DEAL IN CITY OF TRENTO RESEMBLES RUMORS
OF SIMILAR COMPROMISE AT NATIONAL LEVEL.
END SUMMARY.

1. CONGEN VISITED TRENTO FEB 14 TO MEET WITH
PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT AND PARTY OFFICIALS.
2. TRENTO FAMOUS IN ITALY NOT ONLY FOR COUNTERREFORMATION,
MOUNTAIN CLIMBING AND ALCIDE DE GASPERI, BUT AS SEED
BED FOR POST-WAR LEFT WING EXTREMISM SPAWNED IN NEW
FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY WHERE CATHOLIC MILITANTS GAVE
ITALY LOTTA CONTINUA AND ITS DECEDMENTS. TODAY IT IS
DC FIEFDOM OF FLAMINIO PICCOLI, PRESIDENT OF DC CHAMBER
GROUP.
3. THIS BACKGROUND MAKES LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORMULA MORE
THAN PASSINGLY OF INTEREST. PROVINCE STILL CONTROLLED
BY DC WITH NARROW BUT ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. IN CITY OF
100,000 HOWEVER DC HAS LESS THAN HALF OF CITY COUNCIL
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SEATS. UNTIL EIGHT MONTHS AGO, IT HAD MAJORITY WITH
PSDI AND PRI. BUT PSDI SPLIT AND DC UNABLE REASSEMBLE
MAJORITY. AT THAT POINT PCI OFFERED SUPPORT IN EXCHANGE
FOR AGREED PROGRAM AND PRIOR AGREEMENT ON ALL CITY
COUNCIL DECISIONS EVEN THOUGH IT EXCLUDED FROM GIUNTA.
FACED WITH THIS OR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT APPOINTED COM-
MISSIONER, DC ACCEPTED PCI PROPOSAL. WHILE MAYOR AND

DC SECRETARY HAVE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF HOW DEAL MADE, RESULT IS UNDISPUTED. PROGRAM WAS NEGOTIATED WITH PCI

WHICH THEN VOTED CONFIRM DC-PSDI-PRI GIUNTA. COMMITTEE OF THESE PARTIES AND PCI MEETS AND AGREES ON ALL SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS BEFORE CITY COUNCIL SESSIONS AND PCI THEN VOTES WITH GIUNTA TO TAKE FORMAL ACTION.

4. IMPRESSIVE DC MAYOR, IN EARLY FORTIES, SAYS HE DOES NOT LIKE SYSTEM AND THAT NEED TO NEGOTIATE EVERY MOVE IS WEARING. NOR DOES HE TRUST PCI ALTHOUGH HE SAID THAT IT HAD GREATLY CHANGED, BUT HE DESCRIBES SOLUTION AS UNAVOIDABLE NECESSITY. IT HAD BEEN CLEARED WITH PICCOLI IN ROME BEFORE BEING DECIDED AND, AS YOUNG NEW DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY CONFIRMED, WAS GIVEN GREEN LIGHT TO SEE HOW IT WOULD WORK. IT WAS WORKING AND MAYOR WANTED TO CONTINUE. HE, LIKE DC SECRETARY, BELIEVED DC BENEFITED FROM SITUATION AND THAT PCI WAS BEING HURT BY IT. FOR THAT REASON, HE OPPOSED EARLY NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND WANTED MORE TIME FOR PCIPROBLEMS TO MATURE. BOTH MAYOR AND DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, CLAIMED THAT DC WAS SHOWING SURE SIGNS OF REVIVAL AND WOULD BENEFIT FROM MORE TIME TO PREPARE ELECTIONS.

5. WHETHER PRECEDENT OF PCI MEMBERSHIP WITH DC IN CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT MAJORITY HAS ANY INFLUENCE IN ROME, WE CANNOT GUESS. BUT LOCALLY IT HAS HAPPENED WITHOUT APPARENT OUTCRY FROM DC ELECTORATE AND DC OFFICIALS IN TRENTO DID NOT APPEAR WORRIED THAT SIMILAR FORMULA IN ROME WOULD CAUSE THEM EMBARRASSMENT WITH THEIR VOTERSM.

6. PCI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY ALBERTO FERRANDI, 40 YEARS OLD, IS ELDEST OF THREE PRINCIPAL PROVINCIAL SECRETARIES (BOTH DC AND PSI ARE ABOUT 38). UNLIKE FINELY APPOINTED, WELL GROOMED AND CORRECT DC HEADQUARTERS, PCI OFFICES AMPLE BUT CROWDED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND MESSY WITH POLITICALPOSTERS, FLYERS AND OTHER POLITICAL PARAPHERNALIA.

7. FERRANDI SAID PCI SATISFIED WITH ITS SUPPORTING ROLE IN CITY. IT WAS SOMETIMES ROUGH SLEDDING BUT HE SAW NO BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY IN OPPOSITION AS MATTER OF PRINCIPLE. DC IN TRENTO WAS A MASS PARTY WITH GRASS ROOTS SUPPORT COVERING SPECTRUM FROM WORKERS TO MANAGERS, RICH TO POOR. FROM PCI POINT OF VIEW, IT WAS EVOLVING TOWARD DEMOCRACY. PROGRESS WAS SLOW, CONTRADICTORY AND SOMETIMES BAFFLING. BUT TREND WAS CLEAR AND HOPEFUL.

8. WHEN REMINDED THAT COULD WELL BE QUOTE FROM DC'S SECRETARY ABOUT PCI, FERRANDI SAW HUMOR OF PARALLEL BUT INSISTED MOVEMENT WAS BY DC NOT BY HIS PARTY. LIKE DC'S, FERRANDI OPPOSED EARLY NATIONAL ELECTIONS WHICH, IN HIS VIEW, WOULD CHANGE NOTHING. HE EXPECTED SMALL PCI GAINS BUT SAID PARTY DESTINED TO REMAIN MINORITY PARTY IN OVERWHELMINGLY CATHOLIC TRENTO.

9. SUPPOSE PCI VOTE DECLINED NATIONALLY, WOULDN'T PRESENT CONCILIATORY BELINGUER POLICY BE ABANDONED IN FAVOR GREATER MILITANCY? NOT AT ALL, ACCORDING TO FERRANDI. PCI WAS COMMITTED FROM BOTTOM TO TOP TO MAKE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM WORK, TO LIVE WITH ITS RULES AND TO

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WORK WITH CATHOLICS. SHORT TERM UPS AND DOWNS WOULD NOT ALTER THAT BASIC ORIENTATION.

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10. SOCIALIST PROVINCIAL SECY, WALTER MICHIELLI, REPRESENTS LEFT WING OF PSI WHICH GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE TO LEFT OF PCI IN TRENTO, ALTHOUGH HE SAID IT SUPPORTED CRAXI AND SIGNORILE. PSI HAD REFUSED ENTER CITY GIUNTA WITH DC OR JOIN MAJORITY WITH PCI. IT WAS USELESS, HE ARGUED, TO EXPECT INFLUENCE DC AT CITY

LEVEL WHEN REAL POWER HELD BY DC CONTROL OF PROVINCE. SO PSI PREFERRED OPPOSITION TO DISTINGUISH ITSELF FROM PCI AND DC. HE HAD NO REAL DOUBTS ABOUT PCI COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY WHICH WAS GUARANTEED BY ITS MASS FOLLOWING AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT UPON IT. BUT PSI MAINTAINED PCI STILL HAD SOME DISTANCE TO GO TO BECOME FULLY DEMOCRATIC. SPECIFICALLY, DEMOCRATIC CERTARALISM WAS TOO RIGID A SYSTEM ALTHOUGH, HE SAID. PCI IN PROCESS OF REVISING ITS RULES TO CHANGE THIS TOO.

11. EARLY NATIONAL ELECTIONS WERE OPPOSED BY MICHIELLI AS WELL AS BY DC MAYOR, AND PCI AND DC SECRETARIES.

12. WHILE ECONOMY NOT SO CLEARLY FLOURISHING AS IN NEIGHBORING BOLZANO, THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT TRENTO COULDN'T COMPLAIN. IT WAS ASSUREDLY BETTER OFF THAN THE REST OF ITALY. AND WITH A GENEROUS CENTRAL CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY RECEIVED AS ITS SHARE OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGION WITH BOLZANO, THERE WERE EVEN MOMENTS WHEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WONDERED WHERE TO SPEND ITS ALLOWANCE.

13. IF PCI MEMBERSHIP IN CITY GOVT MAJORITY WITH THE DC WAS TRENTO'S BIGGEST NEWS IN THE LAST YEAR, THE RAPID GROWTH OF PRIVATELY CONTROLLED TV MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT.

14. FOR PAST YEAR PICCOLI FORCES HAVE BEEN RAPIDLY SETTING UP PRIVATELY RUN COLOR TV NETWORK TO BLANKET ENTIRE ALTO ADIGE- ALMOST ONE MILLION INHABITANTS. STATION DIRECTOR, RINO PEREGO, FORMER EDITOR, SAYS AUDIENCE RESPONSE ASTONISHING AND FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVEN SEEN FOR NEWSPAPERS. TRENTO STATION ONLY ONE OF ABOUT 20 BEING LINKED TOGETHER BY DC INTERESTS TO COVER MOST OF ITALY AND UNDER DISCREET PATRONAGE OF MIN. TELECOMMUNICATIONS, VITTORINO COLOMBO, POWERFUL MILAN DC SENATOR. AS THIS NETWORK HITS STRIDE, PEREGO SEES IT AS FACTOR CREATING ENTIRELY NEW DIMENSION TO ITALIAN POLITICS. AND FACTOR WHICH DC WILL HAVE ALMOST ENTIRELY IN ITS HANDS. AS IN PAST YEARS, PEREGO PLEADED FOR MORE TIMELY AND SUITABLE MATERIALS FROM USIS, DECLINE OF WHICH DURING PAST DECADE, HE CLAIMED, HAD COST US THE MEDIA BATTLE IN ITALY.

15. THE OBSERVER LEAVES TRENTO WITH AN IMPRESSION OF AN WELL-RUN, SOBER COMMUNITY HAVING VERY FEW SERIOUS PROBLEMS AND ADJUSTING WITHOUT TOO MUCH DIFFICULTY TO THE INCREASED ROLE OF THE PCI IN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT ITS

OPPONENTS DIMINISHING THEIR EFFORTS TO REGAIN THE
PUBLIC SUPPORT NEEDED TO GOVERN WITHOUT IT.FINA
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